



PRESSBOF MEETING

Just a few points to act as a prompt:

AV MATERIAL

What does the PCC want?

We are looking for a simple confirmation that the Code's reference to 'online versions of publications' includes journalistic audio-visual material. The vast range of other internet-related subjects introduced – not at our prompting or request – concern text-based material not generated by professional journalists. These are red herrings and it is difficult to see why they should distract from a decision in principle on the one issue that we are interested in.

What's the urgency?

We have been raising this issue for over a year, and in that time there have been numerous developments in technology and what the industry is offering. It's not just Times TV – although that is an impressive new resource which will inevitably develop further. Regional newspapers such as Newbury Weekly News and Bradford Telegraph and Argus have recently launched local AV news services online, and it is understood that Newsquest journalists on most of their titles are being trained in producing AV products for their websites. Others are bound to follow.

It is inevitable that at some point – we can't say when – there will be a complaint that falls under the Code about it. When it comes, we want the Commission and staff to be prepared, and to be able to investigate the matter with the confidence that the industry considers the PCC to be responsible for doing so.

The second point is that further delay will make the industry and the PCC look inflexible, indecisive and backward-looking. Ignoring it will not persuade others – domestic regulators, officials and politicians in the UK and Europe – from considering the implications. They are already doing so. Why wouldn't the industry here want to be leading the thinking on it?

The role of the PressBoF sub-committee

It is worth noting that the sub-committee which has been holding things up was initially created – at Philip Graf's invitation – to look at the TVWF Directive. It has assumed for itself, with no further direction from PressBoF, this remit of looking at the PCC's jurisdiction over online material. It is not for the sub-committee to decide anything, but to make recommendations to the board. If the work of the committee is to continue, it should:

a) have clearly defined terms of reference to prevent 'mission creep' of the type we have witnessed in this case;

b) not have representatives from the PCC on it, but produce discussion papers to which the PCC can respond. Our presence just seems to encourage point-scoring from the usual suspects rather than any creative thinking.

The kindest thing would be to put it out of its misery as it is pretty useless and backward-looking, but that's a matter for PressBoF.

PCC UPDATE

You will also be expected to give the usual update on the state of the PCC to the board.

Things to mention might include:

- ① • The success of the move – morale of staff higher and better internal communications all being on one floor. We finally let go of Salisbury Square next week;
- ② • The key themes of the annual report: great success at resolving complaints (up 40% last year – we are still operating at that level this year), which inevitably saves newspapers a fortune in comparison with legal costs; privacy still the preserve of the PCC not the courts – now lots of behind the scene work to prevent problems; some concern about paparazzi – newspapers will not want a harassment case to get to court because of Princess Caroline, but we have big role in helping ensure that does not happen; more training of existing journalists; liaising with critics – roundtable lunches etc; external relations – Open Days etc; good results on prominence of corrections; Charter Commissioner and CCP have settled in now and working well;
 - Currently recruiting for lay membership, – Appointments Commission to meet next week but we are conscious of the lack of any ethnic balance at the moment;
 - Forthcoming Commission Away Day to think creatively about future challenges, including AV material if relevant;
 - Looking at ways of improving external communications and getting the message across better to sceptics in Parliament and elsewhere.